

THE LINK

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CANADIAN
FUNERAL COOPERATIVES NETWORK

March 2010

New member profile

The Central Queen's Funeral Co-op

In 1988 a funeral cooperative was organized in the region of New Glasgow and surroundings on Prince Edward Island. When it first began operations, the cooperative was based in an old house, out of which it organized visitations and funeral services in local churches.



In 2002, the members approved plans for what was to be the cooperative's new facility. Construction followed, and the new complex was ready in summer 2003.

The facility includes two visitation rooms and a chapel. Post-funeral receptions can also be held on the premises.

The cooperative is run by a nine-member board of directors who support general manager Donald Matheson in the management of funeral services. It also has two other part-time employees.

The cooperative is comprised of 900 families in the region who have paid for shares at \$50 each. Every year it handles close to 50 deaths. As in the rest of PEI, the rate of deaths handled by cremation is fairly low, at 19%.

For the future, the cooperative expects it will be obliged to innovate in marketing its services, while adjusting its offering to take account of an increased number of cremations.

In fall 2009, Central Queen's became the fifth PEI cooperative to become a member of the Federation of Funeral Cooperatives.

Not to be missed!

The congress and AGM of the Federation of funeral co-operatives will be held next May 28-30 in Alma, Quebec.

We will be contacting you shortly with all the registration and accommodation details, as well as a full agenda.



Management of the selection room

The selection room is one of the most important rooms in the cooperative, because that is where a good deal of its sales are made. When you meet with a family about organizing funeral services, its members decide on the amount they will pay after visiting only two rooms: the arrangement office and the selection room. The image that the family gets of the cooperative is thus directly linked to these two rooms. It is difficult to justify the sale of \$5,000 or \$7,000 worth of funeral services in an office that is a mess or a selection room that is poorly laid out.

Appropriate decoration and lighting. Families do not like to go inside a selection room. Some persons are even unable to cross the doorway. So this room has to be as welcoming as possible.

The colours of the carpet, walls and wallpaper must be warm, welcoming and comforting. The lighting must be soft. Using a halogen lighting system with spotlights on the caskets will give you soft lighting while showcasing your products.

It is also useful to add a few items of reassuring decoration for the families. A table, a floor lamp and plants will help create a warm and homey atmosphere.

Appropriate size and layout. Industry standards dictate that a selection room should ideally have a surface area of 100 square feet per casket. So if a cooperative wants 15 caskets in its selection room, it should have a surface area of 1500 square feet.

It is important to arrange the caskets so that circulating among them is as enjoyable and as easy as possible for the families. Ideally, the caskets should be presented on individual supports the same height as the supports on caskets in the funeral parlour. If space in the selection room is such that caskets have to be arranged on two-tier racks,



Magog Caskets offers a line of environmentally friendly caskets. These caskets are made entirely of wood, with a natural fabric interior and linseed-oil finish. Have you considered adding a few of these to your selection room?

it is preferable to use racks that permit the closed casket on the bottom to be rolled out and opened.

Caskets for every taste and budget. The selection room should offer an assortment of 12 to 20 caskets, from the most modest to the most expensive, so as to satisfy the tastes of all families.

Identification. Every casket must be identified. This identification should include the name of the casket, its features and its price.

You should avoid giving a casket a name derived from technical characteristics that are of significance to the cooperative's staff but mean nothing to the families.

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Management of the selection room

Cremation products. A space in the selection room should be set aside for the display of cremation products. When cremation is imminent, it is important that families be able to see the urn, generally of plastic, in which the ashes will be placed. This will avoid any surprises for the family when they see the urn, and they will also be able to choose a different urn if this one does not suit their needs.

As it is important for families to be familiar with the products they are purchasing, you should also display the cardboard box in which the body will be cremated. You can take this opportunity to present other cremation containers: a wooden box, or a small casket of woollen cloth or wood. With such

an assortment of products, families who do not feel comfortable using the cardboard box can choose a cremation container more in keeping with their values.

Monitor changing tastes and needs. The cooperative should pay ongoing attention to management of its selection room, which is the most valuable part of its facilities. Therefore the price-quality relationship of the products displayed there should be assessed regularly. Furthermore, the needs and tastes of the population are constantly changing, so the cooperative must be able to adjust to demand at the same pace, in order to ensure the satisfaction of its members and its customers.

Source: *Guide de gestion, volet entreprise*, 2008 edition. FCFQ

Canadian tour generating results

The Canadian tour began in Ottawa in April 2008. This first meeting was to act as a pilot, to test our methods. The public meetings organized across Canada serve to present the cooperative model in the funeral industry and the advantages for consumers of having a funeral cooperative in their community, and to validate the interests of citizens in getting involved in creating a funeral cooperative. Little by little, the format of the public information evening was transformed into meetings bringing together leaders from the cooperative community in each designated region.

Since Ottawa, seven other meetings have been held in as many regions of Canada. The results have been eloquent. Committees are presently in place to study the possibility of starting up a funeral cooperative in five major Canadian cities: Ottawa, Winnipeg, Calgary, Regina and Laval. Of those five groups, three have received financial



assistance from the Co-operative Development Initiative to support them in setting up their cooperative.

The tour is continuing in 2010; groups interested in receiving a visit from Annie Normandin are asked to contact her by e-mail at this address: normandin.fcfq@reseaucoop.com.

New tools available from your federation

For many years the Federation has worked to produce educational and awareness-raising tools to meet its members' needs. It also selects the tools that are most in demand and makes them available in English. Recently the Federation has produced two new leaflets in the *A Human Approach* series. A brochure on the record of wishes has also recently been made available. We therefore present to you these three new tools, available in English and in French, in the hope that you will find them useful for your members and customers.

To those I leave behind

This eight-page brochure, a product of the Personal Register, is used to record in writing your members' the last wishes and funeral arrangements. Its primary purpose is to offer your members a chance to reflect upon what they want in the way of funeral rites to mark their passing, but it also gives them an opportunity to put

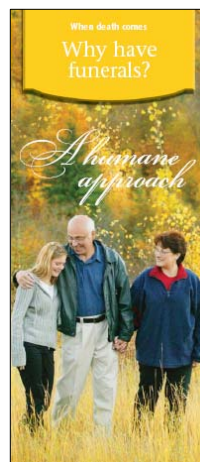


everything down in writing without making any financial commitment. Ideally, this document can be kept at the funeral cooperative and provided to the family when the appropriate time comes. Hence it is a fine alternative for those who do not wish to purchase pre-arrangements.

This document covers selection of the mode of disposition, the visit to the funeral parlour, the burial, the ceremony, the newspaper announcement, and floral arrangements.

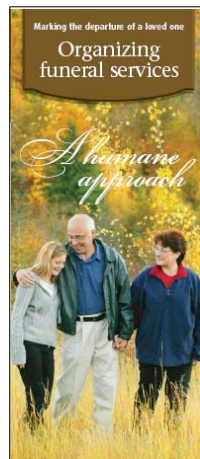
When death comes, why have funerals?

You may want to further develop or improve your argument about the importance of funeral services for families who want only to receive the ashes, and with no ceremony. The new leaflet in the *A Human Approach* series, called "*When death comes, why have funerals?*", explains the four roles that funeral services play in the mourning process: realizing what has just happened, paying tribute to the deceased, letting the loved one go, and coming together to offer mutual support.



Marking the departure of a loved one – Organizing funeral services

This other leaflet in the *A Human Approach* series deals with the questions that the family members of the deceased have to confront when the time comes to organize the funeral services. First, a series of questions are asked so they can start thinking about what they need. Next we cover the simple things that can be done at the funeral to make it an event rich in



meaning. Would the family like a viewing of the body or the ashes at the funeral service? What are the impacts on the choice of mode of disposition? Next is selecting the place where the ceremony will be held: what are the differences between a church ceremony and a ceremony in the cooperative's chapel?

These two brand new leaflets in the *A Human Approach* series are intended as tools for reflection, with which the cooperatives' staff will play an important complementary role.

We remind you that these tools are available to members of the Federation. Contact us for further information.